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ABSTRACT

ASPIRE--"Assisting Special Populations in Readiness for Employment"--is a secondary special education transition program featuring coordinated services between the public and private sectors to integrate secondary level disabled students into subsidized private sector employment. ASPIRE was introduced into the Lake Tahoe Unified School District as a model program in the 1982-83 school year and is beginning its fourth year of operation. In these three years it has systematically and successfully delivered vocational education training and work experience to disabled high school youth 16 years of age and older. It has continued to increase collaboration among the Department of Rehabilitation, the Lake Tahoe Unified School District, the Employment Development Department and the Golden Sierra Job Training Agency and additional community agencies, along with increased participation among local employers, parents, teaching staff and the media. The paper describes the project in terms of community outreach, services management, interagency involvement, education staff involvement, intake and screening, parent involvement, diagnostic assessment, classroom and nonclassroom activities, curriculum, employment services, job development, employer involvement, student placements and student support. (Author/CL)

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Project A.S.P.I.R.E.

"Assisting Special Populations in Readiness for Employment"

A California Work Ability Project

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Abstract

ASPIRE - "Assisting Special Populations in Readiness for Employment" is a secondary Special Education transition program. It is a coordinated service project between the public and private sectors to integrate secondary level disabled students into unsubsidized private sector employment. ASPIRE was introduced to Lake Tahoe Unified School District as a model program in the 1982-'83 school year and is beginning its' fourth year of operation. In these three years it has systematically and successfully delivered vocational education training and work experience to disabled high school youth 16 years of age and older. It has continued to increase collaboration among the Department of Rehabilitation [DR], the Lake Tahoe Unified School District [LTUSD], the Employment Development Department [EDD], and the Golden Sierra Job Training Agency and additional community agencies, along with increased participation among local employers, parents, teaching staff and the media.

Project A.S.P.I.R.E.

"Assisting Special Populations in Readiness for Employment"

A California Work Ability Project

Justification

The U.S. Office of Education defines career education as the "totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as a part of his or her way of living." (U.S. Office Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975)

K.B. Hoyt goes further to define career education as:

The total effort of public education and the community aimed at helping all individuals to become familiar with the work values of a work oriented society, to integrate these values into their personal value system, and to implement these values into their personal lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful, and satisfying to each individual (Hoyt, 1972, p.7).

Starting with the 1968 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act and continuing to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1976, laws have been enacted to promote the development of career education programs. These programs are designed to emphasize the need and responsibility for the development of "successful, appropriate Vocational Education to all students, including all special needs students." (Rice, 1978, p.1) Yet research indicates that 2.5

million non-handicapped students graduate each year with inadequate career preparation. This is magnified for the individual with special needs (Mori, 1980, p.11).

When formal education diminishes in one's life, people with special needs often find themselves without skills that would enable them to engage in useful employment (Purdue Univ., 1977, p.4). These students often lack cognizance and awareness of various available resources. They often lack realistic career goals (Rosenberg, 1980, p.2). According to Kendall's findings, learning disabled adolescents exhibit immature attitudes associated with career choice (1980, p.14). Many come from a socio-economic background where their experience with non-professional occupations is limited. According to Doreen Kronick "their greatest handicap seems to be their inability to generalize from experience." (Rosenberg, 1980, p.2)

Although P.L. 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) mandate appropriate occupational preparation for special needs learners, only a small percentage have recieved a quality occupational program (Mori, 1979, p.55). Possibly the greatest area of need is among the learning disabled programs. Personnel working with learning disabled youngsters often concentrate on the elementary level and little is done at the secondary level with career education. D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978, p.305) surveyed high school LD Resource

teachers and found that:

Fully 37 percent of the teachers seldom or never function in the role of planner or implementer of career education programs. Only 16 percent performed this duty on a regular basis....Only 12 percent of the respondents always or very often are involved in the process of referring students to work experience programs, while 60 percent very seldom or never are involved in placements to the work-experience program.

The above research has confirmed by belief that career education should be the number one priority for any special education program. As a result, with the support of the Lake Tahoe Unified School District Administration, and the joint creative efforts of a local community based organization and Lake Tahoe Unified School District Special Education Staff, a fully funded competitive proposal and resultant program were implemented. Over 60 percent of 16 to 21 year old project participants have been placed in unsubsidized private sector employment over the past three years.

Introduction

Project Work Ability is a coordinated service project between the public and private sectors to integrate disabled secondary students into unsubsidized private sector employment.

In Lake Tahoe Unified School District approximately fifty students receive Special Education services at South Tahoe High School annually. This population includes students classified as learning disabled, mentally retarded, severely handicapped and physically handicapped.

Prior to the implementation of Project "A.S.P.I.R.E." or "Assisting Special Populations in Readiness for Employment", less than 10 percent of students age 16-21 year were employed in the private sector during their school experience. Following graduation, often only 20 percent of these students secured jobs. Programs for these students traditionally emphasized academics. The need to enable disabled high school students, (regardless of disability) to gain the attitudes and skills for competing, qualifying for, and keeping a job became obvious. No "program" or coordination with any community agencies or business existed.

With the funding of Project ASPIRE in 1982-'83, a solution to this need evolved. The project is designed to develop students skills in the areas of job acquisition and retention; to articulate services for disabled youth at the secondary level through Vocational Education, Regional Occupation Programs, Special Education and Job Training and Partnership Act Programs; to provide more comprehensive service which are cost effective and minimize the duplication of services through interagency

collaboration; and to place disabled youth in private sector job training and eventually unsubsidized employment.

The mechanics of the project are as follows. In the first year an extensive community outreach campaign is initiated to make all aware of the program. Students are selected and enrolled in a year long vocational education course consisting of vocational assessment, career exploration, finding job opening, applying for a job, interviewing techniques, getting along with employers and co-workers, job safety, independent living skills, group discussion, problem solving and future career planning. After a series of vocational assessment materials are presented and completed by each student in the program, job development begins based on the students interests. After applying and interviewing, students are placed in a nine week subsidized training experience. The Work Ability staff does job follow-up through monitoring and job site visitation.

It is the primary intent of this paper to describe project ASPIRE as an exemplary model for adaptation or replication by other school districts servicing disabled students in need of a successful transition program.

Community Outreach

Community involvement is a primary component for a successful transition to the employment project. ASPIRE was introduced to local employers, service providers and parents

with two major community events. Then in April of the projects first year an Employer Awareness Seminar, "Employers as Partners" provided an opportunity for Project Staff and employers to together breakdown barriers to employment using Windmills (Dept. of Rehab.) modules for training.

A variety of ongoing processes were implemented to inform the community about the Project and seek help. A Speaker's Bureau, consisting of Project Staff and the TACCD Vocational Subcommittee successfully disseminated information about ASPIRE and the Adult Vocational Program to a total of nine (9) business organizations and service clubs throughout the projects first year. A sound slide production entitled "When Opportunity Knocks" was developed as a means of visual aid. Feedback forms from each presentation served to identify employers interested in becoming involved with ASPIRE. Key employers were contacted individually, regularly throughout the project. In addition, the Board of Directors of Tahoe Human Services and the Board of Education of the Lake Tahoe Unified School District were regularly and periodically apprised of ongoing activities within the Project. Department of Rehabilitation Counselors in the Auburn/Placerville/Lake Tahoe Area and in the Sacramento District were informed about the Project and the successful interagency networking.

The local newspaper has been receptive to efforts to inform

the Tahoe Community about Project ASPIRE. In the first year at least five articles and/or public information releases highlighted some aspect of the project, ranging from an introductory article, to students in the community on career day, to a presentation to regional CRC staff, to our Special Education Vocational Education class Teacher being selected as BPW (Business & Professional Women) Woman of the Year! In the following years, Project ASPIRE has continued to be publicized in our local newspaper.

Project ASPIRE staff was fortunate to attend four statewide Work Ability Project Meetings annually. The opportunity to share ideas and practices with other project staffs, to gain concrete information, and to facilitate local project activities was valuable.

The El Dorado Private Industry Council (PIC) was stimulated by its orientation to Project ASPIRE and discussed the possibility of program expansion. Staff members attended conferences: A Work Experience Educator's Conference (Reno, Nevada) and a Vocational Training Program for Severely Handicapped Workshop (Sacramento) presented by Dr. Ian Pumpian and Windmills Training for Trainers provided by the Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped (Sacramento).

In addition, local employers have participated in the project in a variety of ways beyond providing work experience

training. Some have joined the South Tahoe High School Vocational Education Class to participate in mock job interviews. Others have joined Project Staff in meetings to share their experience as trainer's and employers of disabled adolescents.

The strong element of interagency/community involvement implemented through Project ASPIRE has enhanced the Project's effectiveness and impact markedly. Many employers believe strongly in the Project goals and several perceive their training roles as an ongoing commitment.

Many people in the community are aware of the nature of Project ASPIRE, its interagency linkage, its tie-in to local resources, and anticipated skill building for our students' futures in the world of work.

Services Management

Due to the extensive staff involvement in coordination of this interagency Project, Services Management is an integral part of the Project's success. Services provided to students within the high school are coordinated by the Director acting as administrator for the entire project. This has been accomplished through planning meetings, memos and informal conversations with other staff including counselors, regular educators, ROP and Vocational Education instructors. Transportation to jobs is arranged with the LTUSD Bus Garage.

The Special Education Vocational Education class is attended by nearly all participants and provides an excellent forum for communication with students.

Job Development, job placement, regular monitoring and written evaluations are completed as a student support by the Resource Specialist. LTUSD instructional aides share the responsibilities of providing on-the-job training to students requiring special instruction. A task analysis of each job, useful for both student training and on-the-job performance evaluations, is completed by the Resource Specialist after job site development.

Case conferences are held with DR, or EDD, and LTUSD periodically to discuss individual progress or need. Case conferences requiring parental, student or employer attendance are arranged by the Resource Specialist. Case conferences may also be held with County Mental Health or other community based support organizations.

In most cases, the School District staff are the primary holders of confidential data regarding each student. Written records (with signed release of information) are released to DR including achievement and ability test results and IEP's. The DR releases the IWRP and case notes regarding the outcomes of counseling activities and vocational exploration to the School District. Beyond EDD and DR involvement, instructional aides

provide a minimum of on-the-job training. Verbal coaching, task analysis, IEP's and previous knowledge of students' skills provided information to staff members.

The Project Director provides direction regarding the delivery of services to students, the necessity of interagency coordination, and the facilitation in developing processes that work. The exchange of information is enhanced by monthly meetings written job evaluations and coordinated assessment with DR and EDD.

Inter-Agency Involvement

In the fall, agency representatives from the School District, Department of Rehabilitation and Employment Development Department meet to clarify and delineate roles and responsibilities in the Work Ability Project for the school year. Necessary information is provided and exchanged to enhance implementation of individual agencies responsibilities. Individual students interests and abilities are shared with agency staff to initiate job development.

The School District provides intake/screening, testing/assessment, classroom and non-classroom activities, employment services, job development, job placement, job follow-up, student wages and project management.

Department of Rehabilitation aides in job development, student support services, medical and some psychological

assessment, eligibility for Job Training Partnership Act (J.T.P.A.) and follow-up services.

Employment Development Department participates in jobs referrals, and targeted job tax credit (T.J.T.C.) vouchering and Wagner-Peyser funding.

A community based organization may provide tutorial help and personal and vocational counseling.

Departments of Mental Health provides psychological services if necessary for individuals enrolled in the project.

Coordination and planning meetings continue throughout the year between the School District, EDD, and DR to facilitate the project and eliminate duplication. Assessment procedures to eligiblize students for the DR are coordinated. Student support services are arranged and provided.

Avoiding the duplication of Efforts and cost effective use of resources has required a great deal of coordination. Below is a list of agency activities which have been utilized by the project to avoid duplication of services.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Sponsoring</u>
<u>Activities</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Labor Market information	EDD and DR
Job Development Assistance	EDD and DR
Job Development for Youths	LTUSD

Job Placement for Youths	LTUSD
Vocational, Ability, Interest, & Psychological Assessment	LTUSD and DR
Medical Evaluations	DR
Vocational Education Classes	LTUSD
Transportation	LTUSD
Vocational Services for DR eligible graduate/adults	DR
Transition to Summer Youth Employment Program (S.Y.E.P.)	EDD
Project Directorship	LTUSD
Advisory Group	TACCD and PIC
Vocational and Personal Counseling	Mental Health & THS

Interagency coordination has greatly increased the overall effectiveness of our Work Ability Project. EDD provision of employer wage incentives and DR's student support services were crucial components in many job placements.

Education Staff Involvement

Ongoing communication is established at all levels within the organization. Presentations have been made to Board members since the initiation of the Project. The SELPA Program Specialist and ASPIRE Director are continually updated on the Project and attend necessary conferences, meeting, presentations

with other Special Education teachers in other states as well as our own. They also assist in resolution of barriers. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and the Principal are undated as needed regarding the Project.

On a day-to-day working level, the Resource Specialist Teacher frequently plans and evaluates programs with involved staff at the high school including instructors, the Special Day Class Teacher, a second Resource Specialist Teacher, Food Service Teacher, Vocational Education Class Teachers and instructional aides.

Duplication of efforts has effectively been avoided through ongoing coordination and the strong support for the Project by all sectors both at the High School and at the District level. Below is a list of regular departmental activities which have been tapped by the Project to avoid duplication of services.

<u>Regular Department Activity</u>	<u>Sponsoring</u>
<u>Tapped</u>	<u>Department</u>
Career Research	Career Resource Center Technician
Career Day	Career Resource Center Technician
Local employers quest lectures	Career Resource Center Technician
Made job interview tapes available	Career Resource Center

On-site Work Experience Training	Technician
Pre-vocational Training	Instructional Aides
	Special Day Class/
	Resource Specialist
	Program
Vocational Education Class	Resource Specialist
	Teacher
Specific Vocational Skills Training	Vocational Education
	Classes
Specific Vocational Skills Training	ROP Classes
On-campus project/program coordinator	Resource Specialist
Resource and Troubleshooting	Program Specialist
Transportation	Bus Department/
	Instructional Aides
Coordination with Intermediate School	RSP/SDC Intermediate
	School
Job Development	Resource Specialist
	and Aide
Job Placement	Resource Specialist
	and Aide
Job Follow-up	Resource Specialist
	and Aide

The extensive involvement of staff in Project ASPIRE has

directly facilitated the beginnings of its acceptance as part of the curriculum. Many "in-kind" cost effective services have enhanced the quality and comprehensiveness of its Work Ability Project.

Intake and Screening

In recruiting students for Project ASPIRE involved staff review all special education student who fit Project criteria. In the Spring, once eligibility is determined, the opportunity to participate in the Project is discussed with both students and their parents. The following Fall, additional students are recruited upon referral. The Project is publicized within the school.

Referrals are received from parents, Vocational Education/ROP teachers, the Special Day Class teacher, the Department of Rehabilitation, and students themselves.

Student referrals to this project are initiated by a student, parent, special education teacher, ROP teacher, Work Experience Coordinator or the Department of Rehabilitation Counselor. Referrals are received by the Resource Specialist as the High School Special Education Department Chairperson, who coordinates the necessary testing to determine current skill levels, goals, objectives and eligibility for programs. Once placed in the Special Education program, a student completes the remainder of the vocational assessment. If participation in

Project ASPIRE is appropriate, the student is enrolled in the Special Education Vocational Education class. When all assessments, vocational abilities and interest tests have been completed, students are placed on a job by the Resource Specialist.

A simple list of tools and criteria to determine each students' needs and readiness to participate in Project ASPIRE may include:

1. Student's age
2. Information from parents
3. Information from students
4. Information from Special Educators and Vocational Educators
5. Information from Job Developer following student interviews
6. Results of ability tests.
7. Results of achievement tests
8. Results of vocational assessments

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is initiated in the Spring. During an IEP review meeting, parents of those students recommended for the Project are given a brief overview of Project ASPIRE and the IEP Team's recommendations. Those parents placing their son or daughter in the program are later involved in the development of goals and objectives for performance in the project.

Beyond, the IEP, parents are notified each time a student

goes for a job interview, and when they are hired. At this time it is explained to parents that their responsibilities include transportation home from the job site and student behavior. The ASPIRE employer contract is read and signed by a parent of each student. Additional parent contacts are made at evaluation time or when any problems arise. Parent initiated contact has increased in the Projects last two years. They feel free to contact the Resource Specialist with any concerns, recommendations or just to share things happening at home.

Involving parents in the project by soliciting their input and cooperation has been very instrumental in gaining their support. They are very willing to arrange transportation home from job sites. In addition, parents became a good source of community outreach; they believed in the Project and told others in the community of the project objectives, they supported and encouraged their son's or daughter's participation.

Diagnostic Assessment

The following is a list of commonly completed testing for Project ASPIRE.

Scholastic Aptitude

Students referred to the Project are given the PIAT and other tests such as Key Math, WRAT, Barnell-Loft and Brigance by a Resource Specialist or the Special Day Class instructor. The student is then referred to the school psychologist to

administer the Wisc-R. After Scholastic Aptitude tests are completed, the information is recorded on the IEP and provided to the DR with a signed release.

Vocational Interest and Ability

After students have completed a unit on Self-Esteem in the Vocational Education Class, a battery of Vocational Assessments are administered to students in the Project. The Cops II, CAPS and COPES are completed by each student. A summary of these results are given to DR with a signed release. DR uses, in addition, the Self Directed Search, CAI, Ravens, and locally developed assessment devices for career and interest assessment. Through exploration of each client's work history, transferable skills, self management skills, and trends are identified and shared with Project staff.

Medical

Medical examinations are arranged for and provided by the DR when warranted.

Work Skills and Situational Assessments

Information concerning work skills is provided by ROP teachers and some vocational educational teachers in meetings. Other skill assessments were done at the training sites, rating the students' performances compared to task analysis, and also to general skills for successful employment.

Specific situational assessments, particularly for severely

handicapped students and/or for a student not experiencing success on the job, are conducted to provide data regarding structure of the work environment and possible adaptations necessary to create a successful working opportunity.

Interest Surveys

Interest surveys helped to place students on jobs in which they are interested and motivated to do well. Results are used in general staffings and related specifically to each student's individual barrier to employment.

Armed with data and information from a comprehensive assessment program, students began researching "careers" which matched their abilities and interests. The Vocational Education class emphasized options in fields and ability levels appropriate for students enrolled. Working with the assessment results Project staff shared relevant aptitude, strength and weakness areas with employers so on-the-job training focused on students' strengths.

With each student's work experience assignment based on assessment results, students are motivated to perform on the job. Most students are placed in entry-level jobs.

Based on a survey of employers, results of most current statistics from 1982 through 1985 show over 70 percent of the students involved in work experience were rated as having "very high" success rate on future jobs, regardless of the job

classification of the future position. Over 65 percent of students who participated in work experience training were employed in an unsubsidized position, so the students "future" success has already been enhanced!

Classroom Activities

In support of the local Work Ability Project, the South Tahoe High School offers a Special Education Vocational Education course. The classroom training curriculum is designed to accompany Project ASPIRE and sequenced to provide ongoing support to and skill development for students moving from the sheltered high school campus out into the world of work. Below is a description of the program.

Curriculum: Topical Sequence

- A. Self-esteem - self concept and values clarification
- B. Vocational Assessment - interests, abilities and values
- C. Career exploration
- D. Finding job openings
- E. Applying for a job
- F. Interviewing
- G. Job Description
- H. Getting along with employers
- I. Getting along with Co-workers
- J. Job Safety
- K. Living on your own

L. Group discussions and problem solving

M. Future plans

Useful Learning Materials and Equipment

A. Entering the World of Work (text and workbook) - Mcknight
Pub. Co.

B. Me and Others - Educational Design, Inc.

C. Listening on the Job - Mcknight Pub. Co.

D. Using Want Ads - Janus Book Publishers

E. Job Survival Kit - Singer Educational Division

F. Microcomputer - Apple

G. Software

1. Job readiness Assessment and Development - MCE

2. Survival Series - MCE

3. Job Hunt Game

4. Income Meets Expenses - MCE

5. Reading an Advertisement

H. My Job Application file - Janus Book Publisher

I. Janus Job Interview Kit and Guide - Janus Book Publisher

J. VCR Equipment

K. Job Planner - Janus Book Publisher

Useful Teaching Techniques

A. Group Discussion

B. Role Playing

C. Learning Centers

- D. Student Presentations
- E. Individualized Instruction
- F. Group Instruction
- G. Video Taping
- H. Lecture
- I. Computer - assessed, instruction
- J. Student Research
- K. Utilization of text and workbooks
- L. Group Counseling

This course was designed by the Resource Specialist using commercial and teacher made materials to serve the needs of the Special population enrolled. Modifications are continually made on an as-needed basis by, for example, taping materials for non-readers, or reading to and writing for non-academic students.

Specific curricular modifications are made in lesson plans to accomodate specific student needs related to Project ASPIRE including such activities as a field trip to EDD, presentations by DR staff, etc.

Since Special Education Vocational Education course is offered for students enrolled in the project, extensive staff development has been found unnecessary. However, the high school staff is updated on the Project regularly through brief presentations at the general staff or department chairperson

meetings. Ongoing training is provided to other support staff.

Non-Classroom Activities

After completing the vocational assessment battery, specific and appropriate career clusters are identified for each student. Each student reviews his/her individualized career clusters and then begins researching a minimum of three occupations in the career Resource Center. When the research is completed, students turn in written assignments and make oral presentations on the career of their choice in the Special Education Vocational Education class.

Below is a list of materials utilized by ASPIRE students at the STHS Career Center for career exploration.

- A. Desk Top Careers Kit (Careers, Inc. Largo, Florida)
- B. Career Cluster Kit (Careers, Inc. Largo, Florida)
- C. Subject Career Opportunity Boxes (Time Share, Houghton Mifflin Co. Palo Alto)
- D. Occupational Outlook Handbook - (U.S. Dept. of Labor)
- E. Vocational Biographies - (Vocational Biographies, Inc. Sauk Centre, Minn. 56378)
- F. Dictionary of Occupational Titles - (U.S. Dept. of Labor)
- G. Book Series: Opportunities In... (VGM Career Horizons, Skokie, Illinois)
- H. Watts series of Career Books - (Career Concise Guide;

Franklin, N.Y.)

- I. Popeye Comics - (King Features, N.Y.)
- J. California Occupational Guides - (State of California Employment Development Department - Employment Data and Research)
- K. Open Hanging File -(brochures, special schools)
- L. Filmstrip/cassette -(Pathescope series - 32 careers)
- M. Microfiche - VIEW -(Sacramento County Office of Education)
Microfiche Occupations
- N. QUEST - Microcomputer Software

Work Ability Project students are involved in job site visitations through Career Day. Each student selects specific occupations and the Career Resource Center Technician makes assignments for related job-site visitations. Each spends a portion of a school day on-the-job, and conducts an informational interview. As a follow-up students give oral presentations about their experiences.

The high school's Career Resource Center Technician arranges a variety of local and regional guest speakers to make on-campus presentations about their vocational area. Students attend these presentations when they match students' interest/ability areas. In addition, the entire Vocational Education class may attend presentations for guest speakers.

Employment Services

Based on the student's performances and skills developed at their work sites, they are determined to be "job ready" for the private sector.

The Director/Resource Specialist/Job Developer then proceeds to:

- 1) develop work experience programs which would lead to summer employment,
- 2) begin registration of students for participation in the Summer Youth Employment Program,
- 3) identify those youths and/or employers who could benefit from the use of Targeted Job Tax Credits,
- 4) along with EDD staff, register students with an employment service,
- 5) with the ASPIRE aide, work individually with students to develop resumes,
- 6) provide labor market information through one-to-one counseling with DR and EDD staff,
- 7) meet with individual students for job referral, and
- 8) through direct employer contact, continue to provide student support and follow-up services.

Job Development

Job Development is facilitated through the joint efforts of the School District, Department of Rehabilitation and Employment Development Department. Once students' abilities and interests are assessed, employers are contacted individually by the

Resource Specialist/Vocational Education teacher. These employers are either sought out by ASPIRE staff, located in newspaper want ads, from previous Project years, or referred by Department of Rehabilitation, Employment Development Department or Career Resource Center Technician.

Steps to Job Development

- A. Determine what work the student is interested in doing and assess feasibility for "career" involvement by the student considering students' strengths and weaknesses and the labor market.
- B. Identify a local employer(s) who may have this type of work available
- C. Schedule an appointment and cover the following points:
 1. Type of training available
 2. Work schedule
 3. Purpose of Project
 4. Ability to pay the students' wage during the 9-12 week training period
 5. Identify specific Job Description and Employee Qualifications
 6. Go over Employer/School District/Student/Parent Contract.
 7. Good time/day for the employer to meet with the student

for an interview.

8. Stress that the student should follow typical application procedures.
 9. Obtain an application from the employer.
 10. Tell employer the student will be calling to arrange the interview.
- D. Take the application to the student and tell him/her a little about the position.
 - E. If the student is interested have him/her fill out a rough draft of the application first, and make a phone call to arrange for an interview. (Practice phone call first).
 - F. Check the rough draft of the application for accuracy and have student then complete the original in legible handwriting.
 - G. See that the student has arranged to ride the bus, or has other transportation to the interview.
 - H. Check with the employer to see how the interview went and what was determined.
 - I. Complete employer agreement contract with employer, student, parent and School District.
 - J. Task Analysis of job is completed at job site; copies kept by student, employer, and Vocational Education Teacher.
 - K. Go on the job with the student until he/she is ready to work

semi-independently. This will be on an "as needed" basis.

The economy of this Project's city, South Lake Tahoe, depends primarily on tourism with the heaviest concentration during the summer months. Therefore, during the school year, at the time of placement, most private sector employers maintain a limited regular staff and are unable to expand and absorb the necessary expenses related to the Work Ability Project. Another factor is the initial reluctance of an employer to hire disabled youth with the availability of non-handicapped adults seeking employment.

With economic factors and employer reluctance to hire disabled youth, the availability of student stipends and the targeted job tax credit initially had the greatest single impact on job development. Student stipends granted from both Work Ability and designated Employment Development Department funds were instrumental in the development of some worksites. The targeted job tax credit became an additional incentive factor in several other placements.

Employer Involvement

Generally employers are approached individually. Based on the occupational interests of the students, various employers are contacted by phone or in person. The project goals and employers incentives are explained, and a meeting is arranged with interested employers. Once an employer commits to the

program by agreeing to employ a student, their primary role becomes that of trainer. In addition, they become instrumental in gaining support from other employer through referrals and recommendations.

In addition, employers provide three major advisory functions. Some volunteer to participate in mock, videotaped job interviews with students. Visual feedback from the tape and advice from the employers are effective teaching tools. Secondly, employers participate in Career Day by hosting individual students at their businesses for a full day. Thirdly, employers volunteer as guest speakers at the high school to represent their field.

The initial meeting with the employers is designed to introduce the project and involve them in becoming a training site. Once the student is hire, regular meetings ensue for monitoring purposes, written evaluations are done regularly and conferences are held when a problem arises.

The activities described above are highly successful in generating extensive employer involvement. In addition, local employers help make the outside world of work less threatening to our students by being available to bring working and job seeking skills into the high school curriculum.

Student Placement

The Resource Specialist assesses each student's abilities

and values through a battery of vocational assessments. Students research career clusters of high interest and ability. Upon selection of the top choices, students are counseled in appropriate entry level jobs in their occupational field or a related field. All efforts are made to match students in jobs where their strengths were utilized and where their weaknesses could not interfere with their potential success on the job.

At this time a list of students' interests and abilities are provided to EDD, DR, and the CRC Technician, and the work experience coordinator. These staff members would refer any appropriate job opening to the Resource Specialist. The process of referring a student to a particular worksite with a possible employers is described in a previous section under Job Development.

Job Readiness is determined by the educational staff. Vocational Educators would provide the necessary input concerning student skill level. The Resource Specialist staff assesses students' attitudes, behavior and ability to assume responsibility. The IEP Team would evaluate staff findings and determine if student was job ready.

In many cases, transportation to the work sites is provided by School District buses, transportation home or on weekends was the family's responsibility. The Department of Rehabilitation eligibilizes students for discount Dial-a-Ride, (local

transportation service) privileges.

Student Placements

<u>Job Type</u>	<u>Wages</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Auto Service	1139	LEA*/Employer
Construction	1208	LEA/Employer
Lumber Yard Attendant	1626	LEA/Employer
Food and Beverage	5422	LEA/Employer/DR
Busing	6713	LEA/Employer/DR
Kitchen Worker	4215	LEA/Employer/DR
Apparel Service	13	LEA/Employer
Bookkeeping	238	LEA
Apparel Sales	445	LEA
Fast Food Restaurant	2569	LEA
Janitorial	3809	LEA/CBO/DR
Maintenance	1514	LEA
Ski Technician	391	LEA
Air Transportation	3080	LEA
Stock Clerk	596	CBO
Security Clerk/Dressing	228	CBO
Room Attendent		
Customer Transport	33	CBO/DR
Clerical	213	CBO
Auto Dismantler	67	CBO/LEA

* LEA: Local Education Agency

The student wage incentives secured students' commitments to participate in the project. Collectively, in the Project's three years, the students have earned nearly \$33,000 in wages. The purchasing power and prestige of that money would be an incentive for any high school student. Wages, employer paid or project paid, are critical to the Project's success.

In addition to receiving wages, many of the students receive work experience course credit. This allows students, who often do not excel in academics, the opportunity to receive credit while learning other skills necessary for successful employment.

Another student incentive, internalized, was the pride of being successfully employed. Students boast that they are employed. This feeling of success is truly an immeasurable incentive.

Student Support

A variety of supportive activities are provided to Project ASPIRE students on both an individual and group basis. The three general categories of services not addressed in detail in other sections of this paper include counseling, transportation and adaptations.

Counseling services available through several agencies are appropriately utilized. Counseling services are most directly

linked with and immersed into classroom training. Throughout the entire year, vigilant effort is made to keep classroom instruction related directly to experiences, both positive and difficult, at the work site so the entire program is operated in an integrated and not segmented fashion.

The Special Education Vocational Education class is frequently used as a forum for addressing minor problems on job sites, such as a lack of self-confidence or of initiative. Some students attitudes toward working were negative. Vicariously, other students in the class appeared to gain more appropriate work attitudes through these informal discussions.

Throughout the year, a routine "group" is led by the school psychologist in the Voc. Ed. class. In group, a variety of concepts and topics have been addressed with some exciting and visible results. Emphasis is placed on developing skills both in self-expression and in problem solving with topics including such things as structuring daily routines, family/parental patterns of dealing with anger, stress and personal issues. While the exact measurement of individual changes in these areas is difficult, all staff involved report the following observable results: improved student posture, willingness to listen to what each member of the class has to say (instead of interrupting or put-downs), increased ease in and length of self-expression and positive attitudes, toward class and work!

When students are identified as needing intensive personal counseling as their ability to attend and perform successfully on the job was severely affected, these referrals are made to appropriate local agencies including a community based youth service organization and the Department of Mental Health.

The Department of Rehabilitation provides counseling regarding vocational goal selection and the realities of the labor market. Discussion of post graduation plans and problem resolution. In addition counselors help students accept and cope with limitations due to their specific disability and supply low or no cost medical reports of exams as necessary. Consultation with local Vocational Psychologist is undertaken to evaluate eligibility, resulting in screening out of some project students for services. The DR also may provide assistive devices when required to perform job tasks.

Effectively planned transportation is extremely important. Correlating work schedules and public transportation is not always easy. Some work sites are not on the public transportation routes, so alternatives are used. The School District provides student transportation to some work sites. When parents are unable to provide transportation home from the job due to conflicting work schedules, additional planning is provided by Project staff for the best possible alternative, either public transportation (if available and the student is

capable of using it), or a local transportation service which may include the use of discount vouchers.

Once the Work Experience Coordinator issues work permits, enrolls students in Work Experience for credit and provides some job leads, the Director/Resource Specialist takes over responsibility for the Work Experience component. Continued efforts are made to coordinate the community based work experiences and on-campus instruction. Successful work experience is facilitated in this project through viewing each students' total daily experience (including home, school, work and personality) and from that framework providing support services to meet individual needs.

Follow-up

A primary component of ASPIRE's success is the follow-up offered to the students on a continuous basis. This follow-up supervision insures consistency in confidence, performance and longevity. Work site supervision is the responsibility of the Project Director/Vocational Education Teacher in conjunction with employers. Job monitoring visitations are done on a bi-weekly basis, with the Project Director or Instructional Aide "checking in" both with student and employer. This provides an opportunity to solicit feedback from the employer regarding the students' strengths/weaknesses and then to relay information to the student about skills needing improvement, recent projects or

accomplishments, and skills to be emphasized in the next two week period. Work attitudes emerged frequently as an area in which students needed support.

Written work site evaluations are completed after approximately four and nine weeks on the job. A supervisor, the student, and ASPIRE Director participate in a work site evaluation covering general work attitudes and job performance. In general both employers and students indicate that the written evaluations provide a more concrete means of measuring student performance. Copies of written evaluations are distributed to the student and ASPIRE Director.

As work site training is provided primarily by the employers, frequent monitoring enables the Resource Specialist to be more effective when offering suggestions for training techniques when problems arise. A Training Aide (Instructional Aide) may be provided to more severely handicapped students.

Once offered unsubsidized employment, the Director continues to follow-up in the role of Work Experience Coordinator. The Department of Rehabilitation continues to provide follow-up services to graduates.

Conclusion

The success of this Project's interagency solution to successful transition from public education to employment is evident in a number of areas.

Perhaps the strongest statement for the Project students' present and future employability is from employers. Over 60 percent of the students were hired. In three years 120 employers were contacted. Of these employers, 41 employed students by providing 54 students with Work Ability training.

The students' job site experience on this Work Ability Project most directly improves their future successful employability. Employer and employee satisfaction with work experience training is rated high overall. Over 70 percent of the employers indicated that they would like to participate again in the future. The majority of students who were offered continued unsubsidized employment accepted the positions, indicating satisfaction on the part of the employer and the employee.

The majority of students are placed in entry-level positions "directly related" to their career goals. These individuals had the unusual opportunity to experience first hand their highest interest occupation which provides them direct experience enhancing their future employability in that field.

In addition to specific job duties, participants gained transferable rather than situation specific skills. They gained knowledge in job acquisition and retention. They learned methods of finding appropriate jobs, applying for a job, good attendance, taking initiative, getting along with supervisors

and co-workers, following directions and the desire to improve. These are all necessary skills for continued employment.

As well as the more obvious benefits of this Project there are a number of internal motivations. Students participating in the Project are enthusiastic and look forward to working. Taking part in class activities designed to encourage positive self growth and activities which allow the students to openly discuss their job experience resulting in positive behavior and attitudinal changes.

Through working students have developed a more positive self-concept, evident in greater personal pride, increased responsibility and better grooming habits. Some of the students have shared their accomplishments with their teachers and peers. Students in the regular academic program were able to appreciate the achievements of the Project participants as they witnessed their success and continued employment.

An additional incentive for many students is that they receive work experience credit. This allows those students who do not excel academically the opportunity to receive credit while learning other skills necessary for continued employment.

Wages, employer paid or project paid, are critical to the Project's success. The student wage incentives secure students' commitment to participate in the project. The purchasing power and prestige of this money is an incentive for any high school

student. In three years the students earned nearly \$33,000 in wages. Of these, \$11,959 were Project paid while \$20,953 were paid directly by the employer, indicating their dedication to the Project.

As the above findings indicate, this Project's successful interagency approach functions as a multi-disciplinary program for a group in great need of vocational assistance. As a result, Work Ability, with ASPIRE being one of the original 34 sites, was declared an exemplary program by the U.S. Department of Education. It is hoped that through adoption of exemplary models such as ASPIRE, a greater population of disabled students will make a smooth transition into our society as successfully employed, financially independent adults.

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